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T H E
I N T E R E S T
O F T H E
W H I G S,
With Relation to the
T E S T A C T.

In a LETTER to a Friend.



L O N D O N,

Printed for R. BURLEIGH, in Amen Corner: And sold by the Booksellers of London, and Westminster: 1718.

Price Four Pence.

London: Printed for R. Burleigh, in Amen Corner.

POL SC DIRECT JUNE 1981 \$27.71

(3)

AC91.17812



THE PREFACE.

THES E papers were written, according to the date of them, about twelve months ago, at the desire of a friend. There were some reasons suggested after they were drawn up, why the immediate publication of them would not be so convenient. 'Tis hoped the present opportunity is more favourable; and that the great controversy on foot will evidence they are not now unseasonable.

If the reader will believe a late writer, * who represents it as an opinion only grounded upon

* Dr. Sherlock's Vindication of the Corporation and Test Acts, p. 77.

upon common talk, that a person who loses a place by being refused the sacrament, may have an action against the curate for damages ; he must look upon me to have fallen into that mistake. But I have this to say for myself, that I remember I have heard such as were learned in our laws, give it as their own judgment, and assert it to be the general opinion of the most eminent of their profession. And that I hope will be a sufficient apology for my letting it stand, as it was at first writ.





S I R,

IWISH I was as able to perform the task, which yours of the third instant lays upon me, as your friendship inclines you to imagine. If I fall below your expectations therein, yet I shall have this advantage, that I shall convince you, the honour of your friendship is not thro' a mistake vouchsafed to one insensible of the obligation; since I so readily undertake at your desire an argument, which for some reasons I should not have otherwise cared to meddle with. There are probably, as you observe, many things in our acts of parliament relating to religion, which deserve to be review'd. Doubtless 'tis no disparagement to the wisdom of our ancestors, to suppose the present generation may be better able to judge of the expedience of some laws,

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than the makers of them could do before they saw the consequences of them. And 'tis to be hoped, the rights of subjects have been set in a clearer light than formerly, by some of our late famous writers, and the nation may upon that account be able to frame laws now with the greater exactness.

And since you require me to speak my mind freely, I will tell you what is my wish, *viz.* That when the parliament meets, a committee may be appointed to inquire what laws have been made, in any popish reign with a design to serve that interest, or thro' the influence of a ministry whose affection to it has been notorious. This could not fail of having a very good effect. Nor are we ever like to be deliver'd from the mischievous consequences of popish counsels, while those laws are in force, which were the result of them. But this would be too large a subject for me to undertake at present; and is indeed more proper for those ingenious gentlemen, who are skill'd in the laws of our country. I shall therefore confine myself to the consideration of that particular law, upon which you seem more especially to desire my thoughts. You are sensible I mean the *Test Act.* Concerning which I shall give my reasons, why I think the repealing of it

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is very seasonable in the present conjuncture.

You may perhaps expect, I should immediately fall upon the religious consideration of the act, and should load it with all the heavy charges, that have been brought against it: and that I should principally insist upon the impiety, with which it has been branded, as prostituting the christian religion, and profaning one of its most sacred institutions, making it serve the mean interests of a party, and forcing such scandalous wretches to receive the sacrament, as the primitive christians would have refused to admit to it, if they had offer'd themselves. Or you may reckon, it may be, I will charge upon it much of that atheism and deism, with which the nation at present abounds. Nor am I insensible, how plausibly a great deal may be said upon these, and such like topics; and the rather, because those of the clergy, who are the most zealous advocates for the law, and who are most concern'd to defend it against the accusations of irreligion and impiety, have yet shun'd to undertake such a vindication of it. For I do not remember, I ever met with an author that made any tolerable attempt of that kind. They have contented themselves with making harangues a-

bout the danger the church must be expos'd to, if this, which is thought one of its chief fences, should be remov'd; but as to the danger which many suggest the act carries in it to religion, they never trouble themselves about it. This is so scandalous a neglect in men of their profession, who are such sticklers for the continuance of the act, that it has made many to reproach them, as tho' *they cared not what became of religion, so the church were not in danger.* And they are the more inexcusable in their neglect, because several of the best of their brethren have complain'd of it as a grievous hardship, that they are forc'd under a severe penalty to give men the sacrament, when requir'd, to qualify them for an office, tho' they are certainly persuaded in their own consciences they are utterly unfit to receive it. If the clergy had scorn'd to answer the dissenters upon this head, yet a regard to their own brethren should have oblig'd them to endeavour to ease them of their scruples, and to clear this practice from any of those inconveniences 'tis charged with. But while their zeal for the act has been accompanied with such a profound silence in this respect, they have continued a heavy load upon the consciences of many of their brethren; they have encouraged the dissenters in their pleas

pleas against the church, and made them more popular in their invectives against this practice, as indefensible ; and which is perhaps the most disingenuous of all, they have left an odious charge of impiety and irreligion upon those, who have gratified them in their desires of having the act kept in force. You know, Sir, 'tis a ticklish point for a man to use such arguments as these concerning any law in being, and therefore I purposely wave them all ; and the rather, because, if there be any force in them, serious christians, with whom they are like to weigh most, will easily discern them without my insisting on them. All that I shall endeavour therefore is, to shew that, if there be no irreligion or impiety in the act, yet there are other sufficient political reasons for the whigs to repeal it at this time. And the reasons I insist upon are :

1. The *Test* has been the occasion of much contention and animosity ; nor is the nation ever like to be easy while it continues. The mischiefs of heats and divisions are in no nation in the world more obvious, than our own. We have been like to be destroy'd by them several times, nor shall we ever be safe till they are in some good measure remov'd.

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And certainly nothing tends more to the removing them, than to abolish what has been made the occasion of them, since the thing itself is neither necessary nor useful. Now the greatest part of our quarrels have for a long while been grounded upon this one thing. The first design of the act was to keep out papists from places; but it fell hard upon many protestants, who thought the taking the sacrament according to the manner of the church of *England*, or the taking it as a civil test, was unlawful. There were other dissenters, who had used before to communicate occasionally with the church of *England*, and stuck not to do so after the act was past; and so they qualified themselves for civil offices, from which the act never design'd to exclude them, as is plain to him who considers who were the first contrivers of it. For this they were loaded with all the reproaches that tory malice could invent. And as tho' the tories were assur'd, that they themselves were the worst of all men, the nearer any came to them, and the more favourable thoughts they entertain'd of their worship, the more they hated and abused them.

The nation was long harrass'd with this quarrel, and a fearful struggle there was to ob-

obtain an *Act against occasional Conformity*; and so earnest were the tory gamesters at the time of the *tack*, that they would have staked the safety of the nation for the winning of it. And from that time our party-quarrels have been continually increasing, till they have risen to their present height. Now 'tis evident all this is owing to the *Test Act*. 'Twas this that put the whim in the heads of the tories, that all civil offices of right belong'd to the church of *England*, and that no man as a good subject could be qualified for them, unless he were a staunch churchman. And when they were intoxicated with this pleasant fancy, no wonder they were uneasy to see any dissenters of such a latitude, as made them capable of such honours or profits. But had it not been for the *Test*, civil offices would have been given as such; and all people would have been easy with one another in enjoying their natural rights. But when the tories had got the notion, they enlarg'd their claim, and never ceas'd their restless endeavours, till they got all civil offices made the church's peculiar; so that the *Act against occasional Conformity* may be properly enough look'd upon, as a shoot out of this old root.

Nor did they stop there. There was danger, lest the dissenters should some time or other get their necks out of the yoke: they had shrewd arguments on their side, and if they should have sense enough to manage them, it might happen, that when the dust was work'd out of the peoples eyes, which the tories had blown into them, they might be dispos'd to see the truth, if clearly set before them, and the villany of the tory designs might become hateful, and the rare fabric they had so far advanc'd, be at once overthrown. Nothing therefore was thought so necessary, as that the dissenters should be bred up in a profound ignorance, that they might be fit to be of any church they should be requir'd to be members of. And when they were depriv'd of those few advantages they had for learning, little opposition could be expected from them. Or if the tories could get the teaching of all the youth in the nation into their own hands, no doubt they would take care to train them up in their own goodly principles and practices.

For these ends they strove hard for an *Act against Schism*, which they carry'd, tho' not according to the original draught of the bill, and their own hearts desire. But they would without fail have soon lick'd it into its first shape,

shape, if they had not met with a disappointment on the very day it came to be in force,

The same fancy, which by such means was got into these mens heads, made them resolve to deprive all the dissenters in the nation of their right to vote in the choice of members of parliament; which they will certainly struggle hard for, as the next step to secure the church, if ever the nation comes to be so miserable as to give them a fair opportunity.

And could they carry that point, 'tis not to be thought they would rest there. Ambition and covetousness are insatiable passions, and carry men to the utmost lengths of injustice and oppression; and he that once breaks bounds to gratify them, never knows where to stop. They would as easily have seen a danger arising to the church from the dissenters trading, as from their injoying civil offices. And indeed the increase of trade has been look'd upon by the bigots to be pernicious to the church. And they have acted accordingly. For my Lord *Clarendon* owns, when the power of the churchmen grew transcendent, and indeed the faculties and understandings of the lay counsellors more dull, lazy, and una&ctive, the bishops became jealous that the countenancing another dis-

cipline of the church here, by order of the state, would at least diminish the reputation and dignity of the episcopal government : therefore in some places, as in *London*, and especially in *Norwich*, they passionately and warmly proceeded against the *French*, *Dutch*, and *Walloon* congregations. " So that, says he, " many left the kingdom, to the lessening the manufacture there of kerseys, and narrow cloths, and which was worse, trans- porting that mystery into foreign parts. " * And the same notion of these bigots would have put them upon reviving their old practices. 'Twas easy to make the dissenters driving trades as dangerous to the church, as their holding offices: for if the lion will affirm, that the hare's ears are horns, who shall contest the matter with him ? How plausible is the pretence too in many cases ? A dissenting clothier must needs be a very dangerous person to the church. For beside his wealth, he has many depending on him for their livelihood ; and consequently he can influence many to vote against the church. Why then should it not be as requisit, for the safety of the church, to require all the clothiers to take the sacrament at the church of *England* (that is, to be no dissenters,

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for to be sure they must not be occasional conformists) as it was formerly to require all ale-sellers to do so? For beside that the ale-seller gets by his customers, and must rather humour them than they him, whereas the people employ'd by the clothier are oblig'd to him; I say beside this, the company which the ale-seller may be suppos'd most likely to influence to be for the church, are such as have least need to be influenced at all, they being ordinarily very staunch churchmen.

In short, the struggle between parties is, for ought I can see, like to be everlasting, while the *Test Act* is in force: whereas if it be repealed, there is at once an end put to all this squabble, and every one will enjoy his own natural right, without being envied by his neighbour. When there are different parties, wherein the state is not concern'd (as is really the case in the different religious parties of protestants) 'tis not for the interest of the state to interpose in their quarrels, or to take one side more than another. For by doing so they only increase the feud. When one such party is set above another, it whets an inclination which is natural to all men, to secure and enlarge their power, and consequently to crush and utterly ruin all that stand in their way.

And on the other hand, 'tis as natural for the oppressed to groan under their burdens, to envy and hate their oppressors, and to wait for an opportunity to shake off the yoke ; so that unless there be a form'd design of quite ruining and destroying one party, it seems very impolitic to heighten the animosity, by giving another an advantage over it.

Give me leave, since I am speaking of the necessity of laying animosities, to mention one thing here, tho' 'tis foreign to my present subject. There are two anniversary days observ'd, the 30 of *January* and the 29 of *May*, which however well they might be design'd by the legislature, are now manifestly perverted to be the great opportunities of inflaming mens passions, and the sowing strife and sedition ; the laying them therefore aside, seems to me to be a likely means of quieting mens minds to a good degree. And since *the restoration is made a blessing to us, by the protestant succession*, according to my Lord Bishop of Bangor's very excellent *Sermon*, why may not one anniversary serve for both, and so the festival of the 29 of *May* be translated to the 1 of *August*, the day that the restoration became a blessing to us ? Nor can there be any hurt in laying aside the anniversary fast, since God has turn'd our mourning into rejoicing.

joicing. We have reason to hope, the sin of the day is now forgiven, since God has at length granted the blessing he so long withheld ; and that there is no longer any need, that such a solemn *remembrance should be made of sin every year.* They must have a very mean opinion of God's goodness, or their own prayers, who think God has not forgiven a sin, which they have been yearly confessing, and begining the pardon of for above these fifty years. There can be no reason to think, he calls us still to fast upon that account ; or that it will be any disservice to lay aside a day, whereon so many *fast for strife and debate, and to smite with the fist of wickedness.*

But I return from this, I hope, not unuseful digression from my argument.

2. We may judge, whether repealing this *Act* be adviseable, or not, by observing who are most zealous for it, and for improving upon it. Every one knows the nonjurors and Jacobites are most fond of it, and have most triumph'd in the late enlargements of it. What can be the reason of this, but because they see how well it serves their purposes ? Let any man look a few years back, and consider who were the great sticklers for the *Acts against occasional Conformity, and Schism,* and then judge, whether they have not abundantly discover'd themselves

themselves to be enemies to the government, and friends to the Pretender.

I would not be so uncharitable, as to suppose the late Lords *Bolingbroke* and *Mar*, General *Fenster*, &c. had any concern for religion in what they did. It would be very unjust to charge them with even a mistaken zeal for God, who were so industrious to demonstrate a zeal for the works of the devil. They must therefore herein be understood to act upon a politic design, to serve that interest which was so dear to them. The further they could carry their point in oppressing the dissenters, the nearer prospect they had of setting up the Pretender. And can we then make any doubt, what is the interest of the whigs, who are embark'd in a quite opposite design? Can it be their wisdom to leave the torries their old handle, which they have already improv'd to so great advantage?

3. The dissenters, who suffer by the *Test*, are such as deserve the favour of the government, being most hearty and zealous friends to it. There is no one can make the least doubt of the affection, which the protestant dissenters have all along bore to the protestant succession. During the latter end of the last reign they testified an uncommon stedfastness for it, which enraged the domineering faction to

the highest degree against them, and hasten'd down their vengeance upon them. They thought they could never bear too hard upon a party, which to a man stood in opposition to all their execrable designs. When their enemies expected *oppression would have made them mad*, and break out into some extravagance, which they might improve against them, and so with the better colour destroy them, they were disappointed ; for they bore all with an admirable christian patience, hoping that as soon as the protestant succession took place, they should be eas'd of those burdens which were laid upon them, for the sake of their steady adherence to it. Nor were there any in the nation, that did more sincerely and heartily rejoice in his Majesty's happy accession ; or that more readily concur'd in the choice of such representatives, as were likely to secure the continuance of so great a blessing. Nor have any others suffered peculiarly for the sake of the protestant succession, since it took place. Upon them alone has the rage of the Jacobites, nonjurors, and papists fallen throughout the kingdom. And yet if any one should ask that question, which King *Abasuerus* did concerning *Mordecai* : *What honour and dignity hath been done to them for this?* The answer must

must be the same : *There is nothing done for them hitherto ; but they continue, as before excluded from all honour and dignity ; and are treated as the worst of men, for the sake of their fidelity and allegiance to the King.*

Farther, in the late rebellion, 'twas impossible men should shew themselves more hearty to the government. They challenge their adversaries to name them one single person of any denomination among the *English protestant dissenters*, who had any hand directly or indirectly in the late rebellion. It wholly consisted of papists, and those of the episcopal persuasion, both in *England* and *Scotland*. Have they not then sufficiently merited of the present government, to be eased of those burdens, which the high church clergy, as degenerate as they are, are ashamed to defend ? Will it not be a great reflection upon the whigs, if they continue such grievances upon their best friends, when they gratify none but papists, nonjurors, or perjur'd miscreants thereby ?

4. I further urge the greatness of those hardships, which many of the government's best friends endure by this means. The greater the hardships are, which honest and good subjects are put to by any law, the more reason there is for the abrogation of it.

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of it. By virtue of this act the dissenters have been expos'd to abundance of obloquy and reproach. Their adversaries have taken the advantage of the censure imply'd by the government, to represent them as persons not fit to be trusted. The trusty Sir H—M— was pleas'd to expose the dissenters, who took the sacrament in the church of *England*, as persons whom their own party would not trust: tho' I dare say, he knows a thousand and a thousand of his own principles, who would chuse to trust almost any *occasional Conformist* in the nation, sooner than himself. 'Tis evident, the treatment the dissenters have met with from the government carries in it a severe reflection upon them, and has been vastly improv'd by their enemies. For my own part, I can never believe, the Jacobites would have dared to act with so much insolence in plundering them, had it not been for the observation they made of the lenity of the government toward themselves, and their severity and strictness toward the dissenters.

The tories take this advantage likewise to oppress them throughout the nation. 'Tis not easy for them now to have common justice among their neighbours. Parish officers think they have a right to deal with

men just as they please, unless they come to church ; and the tory justices, which are every where numerous, are ready on all occasions to countenance, and bear them out in what they do. And as things now stand, and are like to stand, while this law is unrepeal'd, what redrefs can be expected ?

Besides, are they not liable to vexation enough from the law itself? Tho' they are made incapable of holding offices, yet they are not exempted from fines and penalties for not holding them. And the tories will not fail, after some time, to make them pay for the service they have done the government, if this weapon should be left in their hands. And if we consider such dealing abstractly from the law, where is the equity and conscience of it? Would it not sound odd, for any law to forbid a man to marry, and yet to fine him for living a batchelor ? Or to forbid his drinking malt drink, and yet require him to pay the excise ? Or if any one is displeased with his own fence, and has a fancy to make it stronger than he needs, let him do it; but let him do it at his own charge, and not be so unconscionable as to expect, that his neighbour should be at the cost of his gratifying his capricious humour. If dissenters are not fit to be trusted in places of profit or honour,

honour, let them not be chosen into them; or let them not be forc'd to pay for their being kept out of them. What reason is there for the dissenters paying the cost of the church's ease? Why should not the conveniences and inconveniences in this case go together?

Nay, is it not an hardship, that good subjects should be treated with disgrace, and be deprived of the advantages which by the law of nature belong to all such in common? How often do the tories insist upon it, that the christian religion makes no alteration in the rights of princes, and therefore they cannot by their religion forfeit them? And does the same religion make any more alteration in the rights of subjects? Why should a subject lose his privileges, any more than a prince his prerogative, by not being of this or the other religion, or denomination? The truth is, there is nothing forfeits the rights of the one or the other, but what is contrary to the interest and welfare of the community: and since there is nothing of this nature in the principles or practices of the dissenters; and their worshiping God according to the dictates of their own consciences, is so far from being a fault, that 'tis their duty; there can be no reason, they should for the sake of their

religion be depriv'd of any privileges or advantages, which belong to all good subjects.

The fearful outcries of the tories, lead me to mention another hardship of this law ; that it may possibly have been a strong temptation to some men to strain their consciences. The tories have maliciously aggravated this matter in despite to justice, truth, and common sense. 'Tis notorious to the world, that the dissenters have all along very much differ'd from one another in their latitude, with reference to communicating with the church of *England*. This difference their adversaries have artfully conceal'd, and then wilfully jumbled them all together, that they might the more plausibly expose them, as men of no conscience or consistency with themselves. They have represented it as the universal principle of the dissenters, that 'tis not lawful to communicate with the church of *England*; and as their practice, to do it notwithstanding. Whereas they who profess'd that principle, always shun'd the practice. And I make no doubt, many of them who communicated with the church, acted in the simplicity of their hearts, and an entire satisfaction in their consciences. But I question, whether this was the case of all.

'Tis not unlikely, some, while they scrupled the lawfulness of the practice, may have been carried further by the temptation, than they were convinc'd was allowable ; and they can never be justify'd in what they have done. But then 'tis a proper query, whether they can be justify'd, who have laid the snare for them ? And 'twill deserve consideration, whether the laying such temptations before men, be not really a disservice to the goverment. For the success of these temptations tends to the making their consciences profligate, and certainly weakens the security the government can have from such subjects. According to my apprehensions, 'twere better not to tempt men by such means to accept offices ; since when they swallow the temptation, they are qualify'd in the eye of the law for the holding them, and too much in their own consciences for the base management of them. I appeal for the confirmation of what I say, to the behaviour of those in the late ministry, who having been educated among the dissenters, were tempted to leave them, and become seared enough in their consciences, to commit the worst of villanies, almost to the ruin of their country. Had it not been better for the nation, if these men had never been tempted to offer violence

violence to their own sentiments, and had kept somewhat more of a tenderness of conscience ?

I would not have the tories bear hard upon the dissenters for what I say on this head. For those who have acted after this rate, are their own darlings. And as to others, who have in some measure strain'd their consciences, and yet have in the main continu'd the same men they were before ; tho' they have done very ill, and have great reason to be thankful that they have not been, as they have seen others, given up to a profligate mind ; yet the tories are the unfeistest men in the world to find fault with them : for if they have strain'd their consciences, 'tis a sign they have some ; and that's much better than to have none at all.

5. The whigs will fix an everlasting jealousy of themselves in the minds of the dissenters, unless they ease them of the hardships laid upon them, now they have an opportunity to do it. The whigs are exceeding complaisant, when they have an interest to serve by the dissenters, but have always made shift hitherto to forget every thing they had said, as soon as their own turn was serv'd. But it may prove a dangerous experiment to them, to hope always to gull their friends with

with vain promises. What must the dissenters think, when they find the tories never fail, as often as they have an opportunity to lay hardships upon them; and that the whigs in their turn never attempt to ease them, nay will sometimes be so dishonourable as to join with the oppressors? Must they not see plainly, they are intended for a sacrifice, and that they have too obsequiously serv'd those, who never intended them any good? The laws already in force, are a pattern and ground-work for the tories to proceed upon, whenever they have an advantage to do it. And we see incroachments have been continually made, upon the liberty granted at the Revolution, which every one must allow was in the first grant narrow enough in all conscience, when he considers either the merits of the dissenters, or the large promises that were made them by the church in the time of their distress. And should the tories once more, according to the fickle humour of the nation, come in play; the dissenters must be abridg'd of all, and have nothing left, but to transplant themselves, where they may breath in a more free air. The late evidence the tories have given the world of their affection to *France*, may save us the trouble of wondering at their following *French* fashions, and copying

copying after that model of persecution. The dissenters, by observing the steps they have taken, can easily guess what they would yet further attempt.

They have, in imitation of the picus *Lewis's* charitable design of converting and saving his subjects, turn'd the dissenters out of all offices, laid them under fines, and shut up their schools and academies. And who can doubt they would gladly follow his example, in forbidding them to manage their several employments? They who dont blush at what is past, will not need to do so at this. There's as much reason for them to forbid the dissenters being public carriers, as *Lewis* did; as their being excise-men: to forbid their taking apprentices for the carrying on their trades; as their teaching schools: to forbid keeping their estates; as their holding hereditary offices, or those purchas'd with their money. And so could the tories have their will, the dissenters must be incapable of any thing, but a jail or a gibbet: and they themselves would soon, according to their earnest desire, monopolize all the offices, trades, lands, liberties, and consciences of the nation. And when this is what they aim at, and toward which they have made such advances; what must the dissenters

think?

think of the whigs, if they never use their endeavours to reverse the mischiefs they have done, and to ease their friends of the great hardships they groan under thro' their oppression? I say, what must they think of the whigs, but that they dont esteem these things hardships, and even concur with the tories, in a base design of consigning them over to an everlasting servitude, or rather to be crush'd to death between two millstones? And will not this make them indifferent, which of them is uppermost? Is it then the interest of the whigs, to leave room for any such jealousy in the minds of the dissenters?

6. Such qualifications are prejudicial to any government. The strength and security of a government lies in having the hearts and hands of all good subjects ready for their assistance. It can never incapacitate any such from acting in its behalf, without weakening itself. When men are merely by their consciences, about matters wherein the state is not concern'd, disqualified to serve it, the only consequence is, that so many men are kept out, who would probably serve it with a good conscience; and the more room is made for others to come in, who will serve it with none at all. A knave will stick at no qualifi-

cations that are requir'd, and the public will be serv'd accordingly. And certainly it must be a great indiscretion to weaken the political, as well as the natural body, by letting out the good blood; and especially in such a case as ours, where there is no superfluity. 'Tis too visible, there is no such excessive plenty of good subjects, as to give an occasion to incapacitate any to act: witness the character of a great number of sheriffs prick'd this year for the counties. If there is no scarcity of friends to the government among the churchmen, I think the whigs did very ill to recommend so many dissenters as they have done for those posts. And if the whigs are sensible of no ill consequence of this act in corporations, nothing is ever like to convince them. 'Tis in vain for them to complain of the bad state in which they generally are, unless they will do somewhat to redress the evil; which is never like to be mend-ed, while this act continues in force.

And tho' the affairs of the Pretender are so miserably shatter'd, that he can have but little hope of success; yet so small a matter often makes a great turn in our giddy nation, that it cannot be a prudent part for the whigs to leave him any advantage against us. Now this act is a sure card for his interest, when-ever

ever he makes an attempt. The dissenters, who would appear against him as one man, are hereby universally incapacitated, unless they will carry a musket, and serve under church officers. And to that they have small encouragement, considering how little common civility or equity they ordinarily meet with, on all other occasions, at the hands of too many of them.

The whigs were sensible of this during the late unnatural rebellion, and therefore talk'd of suspending the *Tess Act* for a time ; and would probably have done it, had not the government speedily quash'd it, by the wise measures which they took. And is it not the whigs interest to deprive the Pretender, and his adherents, of such an advantage ? I appeal to any man of common sense : Would it have been safe to trust the dissenters in a time of such great danger, when rebels were actually in the field, and the whole nation lay at stake ; and can it be hazardous to trust them at other times ? If the removal of their incapacity would have been a disservice to the Pretender in the attempt he made, would it not in like manner be a discouragement to him from making another ?

If it be said ; The dissenters may be trusted in opposition to the Pretender, because they

hate him ; but yet there may be danger of their falling in with some other interest against the government, if their incapacity for offices should be absolutely remov'd. I answer : Such general suggestions deserve no regard, there being no man in the world who is not as liable to them. If they are of any weight, they must destroy all mutual trust and confidence, and reduce all mankind into Mr. Hobbes's state of nature. And I defy tory malice itself, to name me the interest, the dissenters can be thought likely to fall in with against the government. This is a most impudent fiction of men, who make lies their refuge, and just like that, which they had the conscience to make a handle against them in the latter end of the Queen's reign, That the dissenters were endeavouring to bring in the Pretender.

7. The tory interest has been considerably strengthen'd by the dissenters who have been tempted over to the church, and therefore it will be prudence in the whigs to remove the temptation. The whigs are sure of men as long as they continue dissenters ; but 'tis very common, when any of them leave their party, they leave also their whigish principles, and turn high churchmen. This is notorious among all ranks of those who have gone off from

from them. And how much has the whig interest declin'd of late years by this means ? The temptation is strong to young persons, who are setting out in the world, and laying schemes for their raising themselves in it. 'Tis grievous to men of any ingenuity, to be treated with that disrespect and contempt the dissenters are by the laws, and in conversation. And why should the whigs be zealous to make proselytes to the church, when perhaps one half they win over to the church, are lost to christianity and the government ? And if my observation does not fail me, the virtue and piety of the church lies among those who were always bred up in her communion, rather than among the new converts. And since the whigs are not so stingy as to think the dissenters no christians, or incapable of salvation, 'twere more advisable not to tempt them off from their old friends, but to encourage them rather to continue as they are, that the government may be sure of them.

8. This may hereafter save the whigs a great deal of money in their pockets. The bribery that is become so common in elections is a scandal to the nation, and a heavy burden upon gentlemen who desire to serve their country. But I will maintain, the whigs will save money by encouraging the dissenters, and

and bringing them more into play. I appeal to those who have had an opportunity of knowing, whether candidates use to spend much upon dissenting voters, whether they have not their voices and interest easily and readily, when they are known to be hearty for liberty, property, and the present government. Were the votes of dissenters double what they are at present, the whigs would need to be at little charge any where ; and the tories would save by it too, for they would soon be convinc'd 'twas to no purpose to spend their money. Let the whigs then consider, where their prudence will be in putting a knife into the tories hands, wherewith they may cut their throats.

9. 'Tis the interest of the whigs to take a way the *Tent*, because this will strengthen the union of the two kingdoms. The whigs who are the true friends of *Great Britain*, were the contrivers and accomplishers of this union. The tories were sensible of its being mischievous to their interest, and therefore endeavour'd what they could to prevent its being made, and after it was made, to break it by invading the rights of the kirk establish'd by it. This has rais'd a jealousy and uneasiness in that part of the united kingdom, who have notwithstanding been nobly steddy in

the late troubles. And what can the whigs do better in pursuance of their own project, than to strengthen the union, not only by taking off the hardships laid upon the kirk in breach of public faith, but also by removing what is the greatest matter of jealousy and uneasiness to them? And I dare say, that is the *Test*, which they were very hardly, and indeed unhappily, brought to bear with at the union. They will thus be made easy, without any one's being injur'd or oppress'd. And when the occasion of jealousy between the two national churches is remov'd, they may grow to a better temper toward one another, and both at length reap noble advantages of the national union.

10. The whigs may now repeal this act with a great deal of safety, and have perhaps a better opportunity for it than they are ever like to have again. Nor can the fear of disobliging the tories be any reasonable objection, since they cannot be more bitter against them than they are already. Besides, the septennial act has set the next election at such a distance, that 'tis not like to be much influenced by what the whigs shall do at present for the ease of their friends. Unless perhaps in this respect, that the advantages which by this means must accrue to the public, will by that



that time appear so evident and considerable, as can't but induce every honest sensible whig the more chearfully to vote for such gentlemen, to whom they have been oblig'd for them. Whereas on the contrary, 'tis not to be imagin'd any tory will ever give his vote for a whig, meerly for his having been against the repeal of this act.

Thus, Sir, I have gone thro' the subject you was pleas'd to assign me, with as much brevity as I could: I leave it now to you, to make what use you please of it. I am,

Dear Sir,

Jan. 16th. 171⁶.

Your humble Servant:



